

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE  
MEMPHIS DIVISION**

**BRANDON SMITH,  
individually,**

**Plaintiff,**

**v.**

**EARTH RESOURCES CO  
and  
MAPCO EXPRESS, INC.**

**Defendants.**

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**Case No.** \_\_\_\_\_

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**COMPLAINT**

Plaintiff BRANDON SMITH (“SMITH” or “Plaintiff”) hereby sues Defendants, EARTH RESOURCES CO and MAPCO EXPRESS, INC., (“Defendants”) pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.* (“ADA”), and its implementing regulations, the ADA’s Accessibility Guidelines, 28 C.F.R. Part 36 (“ADAAG”) and alleges as follows:

**JURISDICTION AND PARTIES**

1. This is an action for declaratory and injunctive relief pursuant to Title III of the ADA. This Court is vested with original jurisdiction over the action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1343 for Plaintiff’s claims pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.*, based upon Defendants, EARTH RESOURCES CO and MAPCO

EXPRESS, INC.'s, failure to remove physical barriers to access and violations of Title III of the ADA.

2. Venue is properly located in the Western District of Tennessee pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b) because venue lies in the judicial district of the property situs or the judicial district in which a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to Plaintiff's claims occurred. The Defendants' property is located in and does business within this judicial district and all events giving rise to this lawsuit occurred in this judicial district.

3. Plaintiff, BRANDON SMITH, is and has been at all times relevant to the instant matter, a natural person residing in Tennessee and is sui juris.

4. Plaintiff is an individual with disabilities as defined by the ADA.

5. Plaintiff is substantially limited in performing one or more major life activities, including but not limited to: walking, standing, grabbing, grasping and/or pinching.

6. Plaintiff uses a wheelchair for mobility purposes.

7. Plaintiff is also an independent advocate of the rights of similarly situated disabled persons and is a "tester" for the purpose of enforcing Plaintiff's civil rights, monitoring, determining and ensuring whether places of public accommodation are in compliance with the ADA. Plaintiff's motivation to return to a location, in part, stems from a desire to utilize ADA litigation to make his home

community more accessible for Plaintiff and others; and pledges to do whatever is necessary to create the requisite standing to confer jurisdiction upon this Court so an injunction can be issued correcting the numerous ADA violations on the Subject Property, including returning to the Subject Property as soon as it is accessible (“Advocacy Purposes”).

8. Defendant, EARTH RESOURCES CO, is a corporation conducting business in the State of Tennessee.

9. MAPCO EXPRESS, INC. is a corporation registered with the State of Tennessee and conducting business in the State of Tennessee and within this judicial district.

### **FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**

10. On or about January 22nd of 2021, Plaintiff attempted to but was deterred from patronizing, and/or gaining equal access as a disabled patron to the Mapco Gas Station located at 1336 Poplar Ave, Memphis, Tennessee 38104. (“Subject Facility”, “Subject Property”).

11. EARTH RESOURCES CO and MAPCO EXPRESS, INC., are the owners, lessors, and/or operators/lessees of the real property and improvements that are the subject of this action, specifically Mapco Gas Station and its attendant facilities, including vehicular parking and common exterior paths of travel within

the site identified by the Shelby County Register of Deeds by Parcel ID: 017043 00062C (“Subject Facility”, Subject Property).

12. Plaintiff lives within twenty (20) miles of the Subject Property. Because the Subject Property is in the immediate vicinity of the Plaintiff’s residence, he is routinely in the area where the subject facility is located and travels near the Subject Property multiple times per month.

13. Plaintiff’s access to the Subject Property and/or full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein were denied and/or limited because of his disabilities, and he will be denied and/or limited in the future unless and until Defendants, EARTH RESOURCES CO and MAPCO EXPRESS, INC., are compelled to remove the physical barriers to access and correct the ADA violations that exist at the Subject Property, including those set forth in this Complaint.

14. Plaintiff has visited, i.e. attempted to patronize, the Subject Property on multiple prior occasions, and at least once before as a patron and advocate for the disabled. Plaintiff intends on revisiting the Subject Property within six months of the filing of this Complaint or sooner, as soon as the barriers to access detailed in this Complaint are removed. The purpose of the revisit is to be a regular patron, to determine if and when the Subject Property is made accessible, and to maintain standing for this lawsuit for Advocacy Purposes.

15. Plaintiff intends on revisiting the Subject Property to enjoy the same experiences, goods, and services available to Defendants' non-disabled patron as well as for Advocacy Purposes, but does not intend to continue to repeatedly re-expose himself to the ongoing barriers to equal access and engage in the futile gesture of attempting to patronize the Subject Property, a business of public accommodation known to Plaintiff to have numerous and continuing barriers to equal access for wheelchair users.

16. Plaintiff recently traveled to the Subject Property as a patron and as an independent advocate for the disabled, encountered and/or observed the barriers to access that are detailed in this Complaint, engaged those barriers where physically possible, suffered legal harm and legal injury, and will continue to suffer such harm and injury as a result of the illegal barriers to equal access present at the Subject Property.

**COUNT I – CLAIM FOR INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**  
**(Against Defendants for ADA Violations)**

17. The effective date of Title III of the ADA was January 26, 1992 (or January 26, 1993 if a defendant has 10 or fewer employees and gross receipts of \$500,000 or less). 42 U.S.C. § 12181; 28 C.F.R. § 36.508(a).

18. The Subject Property is a public accommodation and service establishment.

19. Pursuant to the mandates of 42 U.S.C. § 12134(a), on July 26, 1991, the Department of Justice and Office of Attorney General promulgated federal regulations to implement the requirements of the ADA. 28 C.F.R. Part 36.

20. Public accommodations were required to conform to these regulations by January 26, 1992 (or by January 26, 1993 if a defendant has 10 or fewer employees and gross receipts of \$500,000 or less). 42 U.S.C. § 12181 *et seq.*; 28 C.F.R. § 36.508(a).

21. The Subject Property must be, but is not, in compliance with the ADA and the ADAAG.

22. Plaintiff has attempted to, and has to the extent possible, accessed the Subject Property in his capacity as a patron at the Subject Property and as an independent advocate for the disabled, but could not fully do so because of his disabilities resulting from the physical barriers to access, dangerous conditions and ADA violations that exist at the Subject Property that preclude and/or limit his access to the Subject Property and/or the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein, including those barriers, conditions and ADA violations more specifically set forth in this Complaint.

23. Plaintiff intends to visit the Subject Property again in the very near future as a patron and as an independent advocate for the disabled, in order to utilize all of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations

commonly offered to able-bodied patrons of the Subject Property but will be unable to fully do so because of his disability and the physical barriers to access, dangerous conditions and ADA violations that exist at the Subject Property that preclude and/or limit his access to the Subject Property and/or the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations offered therein, including those barriers, conditions and ADA violations more specifically set forth in this Complaint.

24. Defendants, EARTH RESOURCES CO and MAPCO EXPRESS, INC., have discriminated against Plaintiff (and others with disabilities) by denying him access to, and full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and/or accommodations of the Subject Property, as prohibited by, and by failing to remove architectural barriers as required by, 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv).

25. Defendants, EARTH RESOURCES CO and MAPCO EXPRESS, INC., will continue to discriminate against Plaintiff and others with disabilities unless and until EARTH RESOURCES CO and MAPCO EXPRESS, INC., are compelled to remove all physical barriers that exist at the Subject Property, including those specifically set forth herein, and make the Subject Property accessible to and usable by Plaintiff and other persons with disabilities.

26. A specific list of unlawful physical barriers, dangerous conditions and ADA violations which Plaintiff experienced and/or observed that precluded and/or limited Plaintiff's access to the Subject Property and the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and accommodations of the Subject Property include, but are not limited to:

#### ACCESSIBLE PARKING

- a. There is no van accessible parking present designated as such with upright signage in violation of Section 4.6 of the 1991 ADAAG and Section 502 of the 2010 ADAAG. This violation made it dangerous for Plaintiff to utilize the parking facility at the Subject Property and caused Plaintiff undue upset and loss of opportunity.
- b. There is no signage to denote an accessible space on the western designated accessible parking space in violation of Section 4.6 of the 1991 ADAAG and Section 502 of the 2010 ADAAG. This violation made it dangerous for Plaintiff to utilize the parking facility at the Subject Property and caused Plaintiff undue upset and loss of opportunity.
- c. The purported accessible parking space is not level in all directions and has areas of uneven and/or broken pavement because of Defendants' practice of failing to inspect and maintain the parking surface in violation of 28 CFR § 36.211, Sections 4.5.1 and 4.6.3 of the 1991 ADAAG and Sections 302 and 502.4 of the 2010 ADAAG. This violation made it dangerous for Plaintiff to utilize the parking facility at the Subject Property



and caused Plaintiff undue upset and loss of opportunity.

#### ACCESSIBLE ROUTES/RAMPS

- d. There is no accessible route from the parking lot to the entrance of the store in that there is broken/cracked pavement throughout the parking lot in violation of Section 4.6.2 of the 1991 ADAAG and Section 206.2.2 of the 2010 ADAAG. This violation prevented safe access to the plaintiff and caused Plaintiff undue upset and loss of opportunity.
- e. The purported accessible routes from the purported accessible parking to the curb ramps along the various paths of travel to the tenant space entrances have unpermitted changes in level in violation of Section 4.3.8 of the 1991 ADAAG and Section 403.4 of the 2010 ADAAG. This violation prevented safe access to the plaintiff and caused Plaintiff undue upset and loss of opportunity.
- f. The curb ramp connecting the parking lot to the sidewalk at the Subject Property has a running-slope which exceeds the maximum slope requirement (8.33%) set forth in Section 4.7.2 of the 1991 ADAAG and Section 406.1 of the 2010 ADAAG. These violations prevented safe access to the plaintiff and caused Plaintiff undue upset and loss of opportunity.
- g. The curb ramp at the Subject Property has a run with abrupt changes in level at the bottom transitions from the parking surface to the ramps in violation of Section 4.3.8 of the 1991 ADAAG and Sections 303.3 and 303.4 of the 2010 ADAAG. This violation prevented

safe access to the plaintiff and caused Plaintiff undue upset and loss of opportunity.

- h. There is no accessible route to the public sidewalk that is adjacent to the Subject property in violation of Section 4.1.2 of the 1991 ADAAG and 36.304 of the 2010 ADAAG. This violation prevented safe access to the Plaintiff and caused Plaintiff undue upset and loss of opportunity.

#### ACCESSIBLE RESTROOMS

- i. The restrooms have door closers that have not been maintained properly by Defendant which has caused the pressure required to open/close the restroom doors to increase with time and use such that the restroom door requires excessive force to open. Violation: The restrooms' doors require more than the maximum allowable opening force for an interior hinged door (5 foot pounds-force) in violation of Section 4.13.11 of the 1991 ADAAG and Section 404.2.9 of the 2010 ADAAG Standards. This accessible feature is not being maintained by Defendant in violation of 28 CFR § 36.211. These violations prevented access to Plaintiff equal to that of able-bodied individuals and caused Plaintiff undue upset and loss of opportunity.
- j. The restrooms have door closers that cause the restroom doors to close too quickly. Violation: The sweep speed settings of the door closers for the accessible restrooms' doors have not been maintained properly by Defendant which has caused the door closing speed to increase with time and use so that the time allowed to transition the door, from an open position of 90 degrees to a position of 12 degrees from

the latch, is too brief to allow individuals with mobility impairments to enter and/or exit safely, independently and/or without difficulty in violation of Section 4.13.10 of the 1991 ADAAG and Section 404.2.8 of the 2010 ADAAG. This accessible feature is not being maintained by Defendant in violation of 28 CFR § 36.211. These violations prevented access to Plaintiff equal to that of able-bodied individuals and caused Plaintiff undue upset and loss of opportunity.

#### ACCESS TO GOODS/SERVICES

- k. The self-serve tableware, cups, straws, condiments, and/or drink dispensers are positioned too high for wheelchairs users to reach. Violation: The self-serve tableware, dishware, cups, straws, condiments, food and/or operable parts of the drink dispensers exceed the maximum allowable height for a vertical (side) reach in violation of Section 5.2 of the 1991 ADAAG and Sections 308.3.2 and 904.5.1 of the 2010 ADAAG. These accessible features are not being maintained by Defendants in violation of 28 CFR § 36.211. These violations prevented Plaintiff's access to these items equal to that of Defendants' able-bodied customers and caused Plaintiff undue upset and loss of opportunity.
  
- l. The counter upon which the self-serve drink dispensers are positioned is too high for equal access to wheelchair users. Violation: The self-serve drink dispenser counter is over 34 inches from the floor which is the minimum accessible height for a high (side) reach obstruction in violation of Section 4.2.6 of the 1991 ADAAG and Sections 308.3.2 and 904.5.1 of the 2010 ADAAG. This violation prevented access to Plaintiff equal to that of able-bodied individuals and caused Plaintiff undue upset and loss of opportunity.

## MAINTENANCE PRACTICES

- m. Defendants have a practice of failing to maintain the accessible features of the facility, creating barriers to access for the Plaintiff, as set forth herein, in violation of 28 CFR § 36.211. This practice prevented access to the plaintiff equal to that of Defendants' able-bodied customers causing Plaintiff loss of opportunity, anxiety, humiliation and/or embarrassment.
- n. Defendants have a practice of failing to maintain the accessible elements at the Subject Facility by neglecting their continuing duty to review, inspect, and discover transient accessible elements which by the nature of their design or placement, frequency of usage, exposure to weather and/or other factors, are prone to shift from compliant to noncompliant so that said elements may be discovered and remediated. Defendants failed and continue to fail to alter their inadequate maintenance practices to prevent future recurrence of noncompliance with dynamic accessible elements at the Subject Facility in violation of 28 CFR § 36.211, the 1991 ADAAG, and the 2010 ADAAG. These violations, as set forth hereinabove, made it impossible for Plaintiff to experience the same access to the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and accommodations of the Subject Facility as Defendants' able-bodied patrons and caused Plaintiff loss of opportunity, anxiety, embarrassment and/or humiliation.
- o. Defendants have failed to modify their discriminatory maintenance practices to ensure that, pursuant to their continuing duty under the ADA, the Subject Property remains readily accessible to and usable by disabled individuals, including Plaintiff, as set forth herein, in

violation of 28 CFR § 36.302 and 36.211. This failure by Defendants prevented access to the plaintiff equal to that of Defendants' able-bodied customers causing Plaintiff loss of opportunity, anxiety, humiliation and/or embarrassment.

27. The discriminatory violations described above are not an exhaustive list of the Defendants' current barriers to equal access and violations of the ADA because Plaintiff was unable to access and assess all areas of the subject premises due to the architectural barriers encountered. A complete list of the subject location's ADA violations affecting the Plaintiff as a wheelchair user, and the remedial measures necessary to remove same, will require an on-site inspection by Plaintiff's representatives pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 34. Once the Plaintiff personally encounters discrimination, as alleged above, or learns of discriminatory violations through expert findings of personal observation, he has actual notice that the defendants do not intend to comply with the ADA.

28. The Defendants have a practice of failing to maintain the accessible elements at the Subject Property by neglecting their continuing duty to review, inspect, and discover transient accessible elements which by the nature of their design or placement, frequency of usage, exposure to weather and/or other factors, are prone to shift from compliant to noncompliant, so that said elements are

discovered and remediated. Defendants failed and continues to fail to alter their inadequate maintenance practices to prevent future recurrence of noncompliance with dynamic accessible elements at the Subject Property in violation of 28 CFR §§ 36.202 and 36.211. These violations, as referenced hereinabove, made it impossible for Plaintiff, as a wheelchair user, to experience the same access to the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and accommodations of the Subject Property as Defendants' able-bodied patrons.

29. Accessible elements at the Subject Property have been altered and/or constructed since 2010.

30. The foregoing violations are violations of the 1991 ADAAG, and the 2010 ADAAG, as adopted by the U.S. Department of Justice. In instances where the 2010 ADAAG standards do not apply, the 1991 ADAAG standards apply, and all of the alleged violations set forth herein can be modified to comply with the 1991 ADAAG standards.

31. The removal of the physical barriers, dangerous conditions and ADA violations alleged herein is readily achievable and can be accomplished and carried out without significant difficulty or expense. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv); 42 U.S.C. § 12181(9); 28 C.F.R. § 36.304.

32. Each of the violations alleged herein is readily achievable to modify to bring the Subject Property into compliance with the ADA.

33. Removal of the physical barriers and dangerous conditions present at the Subject Property is readily achievable because of the site conditions at the Subject Property, the structural design of the subject facility, and the straightforward nature of the necessary modifications.

34. To assist businesses in offsetting the costs associated with complying with the ADA and removing barriers to access for individuals with disabilities, Section 44 of the IRS Code provides a tax credit for small business owners, and Section 190 of the IRS Code provides a tax deduction for all business owners, including the Defendant.

35. Removal of the physical barriers and dangerous conditions at the Subject Property is readily achievable because of the relative low cost of the necessary modifications and the Defendant has the financial resources to make the modifications, including the financial assistance made available to Defendant by the government pursuant to Section 44 and/or Section 190 of the IRS Code.

36. By continuing to maintain and/or operate the Subject Property with discriminatory conditions in violation of the ADA, Defendants contribute to Plaintiff's sense of isolation and segregation and deprives Plaintiff of the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, and accommodations available to able bodied individuals of the general public.

37. Defendants are required to remove the existing architectural barriers to

the physically disabled when such removal is readily achievable for their places of public accommodation that have existed prior to January 26, 1992, 28 CFR 36.304(a); additionally, if there has been an alteration to Defendants' place of public accommodation since January 26, 1992, then Defendants are required to ensure to the maximum extent feasible, that the altered portions of the facility are readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, including people who use wheelchairs, 28 CFR 36.402; and finally, if the Defendants' facilities were designed and constructed for first occupancy subsequent to January 26, 1993, as defined in 28 CFR 36.401, then the Defendants' facilities must be readily accessible to and useable by individuals with disabilities as defined by the ADA. To date, Defendants have failed to comply with this mandate.

38. Plaintiff is without adequate remedy at law and is suffering irreparable harm and reasonably anticipates that he will continue to suffer irreparable harm unless and until Defendants, EARTH RESOURCES CO and MAPCO EXPRESS, INC., are required to remove the physical barriers, dangerous conditions and ADA violations that exist at the Subject Property, including those alleged herein. Considering the balance of hardships between the Plaintiff and Defendants, a remedy in equity is warranted.

39. Plaintiff's requested relief serves the public interest.



40. Plaintiff's counsel is entitled to recover its reasonable attorneys' fees and costs of litigation from Defendants, EARTH RESOURCES CO and MAPCO EXPRESS, INC., pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §§ 12188, 12205 and 28 CFR 36.505. Plaintiff will be denied full and equal access to the subject premises, as provided by the ADA unless the injunctive relief requested herein is granted.

41. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12188, this Court is vested with the authority to grant Plaintiff injunctive relief; including an Order to alter the subject facilities to make them readily accessible to, and useable by, individuals with disabilities to the extent required by the ADA, and closing the subject facilities until the requisite modifications are completed, and ordering Defendants to fulfill their continuing duty to maintain the accessible features at the premises in the future as mandated by 28 CFR 36.211.

WHEREFORE, the Plaintiff prays as follows:

- A. That the Court find Defendants, EARTH RESOURCES CO and MAPCO EXPRESS, INC., in violation of the ADA and ADAAG;
- B. That the Court enter an Order requiring Defendants, EARTH RESOURCES CO and MAPCO EXPRESS, INC., (i) remove the physical barriers to access and (ii) alter the Subject Property to make the Subject Property readily accessible to and useable by individuals with disabilities to the full extent required by Title III of the ADA;
- C. That the Court enter an Order directing Defendants, pursuant to 28 C.F.R. §36.211, to fulfill their continuing

duty to maintain their accessible features and equipment so that the facility remains accessible to and useable by individuals with disabilities to the full extent required by Title III of the ADA;

- D. That the Court enter an Order directing Defendants to implement and carry out effective policies, practices, and procedures to maintain the accessible features and equipment pursuant to 28 C.F.R. §36.302 and 28 C.F.R. §36.211.
- E. That the Court enter an Order directing Defendants to evaluate and neutralize their policies and procedures towards persons with disabilities for such reasonable time so as to allow them to undertake and complete corrective procedures;
- F. An award of attorneys' fees, costs (including expert fees), and litigation expenses pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 12205; including costs of monitoring Defendants' compliance with the judgment.
- G. An award of interest upon the original sums of said award of attorney's fees, costs (including expert fees), and other expenses of suit; and
- H. Such other relief as the Court deems just and proper, and/or is allowable under Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Dated this the 3rd day of February, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

By: /s/ J. Luke Sanderson

Jeffrey Lucas Sanderson, Esq.

Counsel for Plaintiff

Tennessee State Bar No.: #35712

Of Counsel:

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